

ARE YOU READY?



Get Ready

AN INITIATIVE OF THE
AMERICAN PUBLIC HEALTH ASSOCIATION

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Emergency preparedness for pregnant women and families with infants

Disasters can be stressful, especially if you are pregnant or caring for an infant. Making plans ahead of time and knowing what to do when a disaster occurs can help keep you safe during an emergency.

Get ready before a disaster

- Learn about safety and evacuation procedures for your child's school or day care.
- Take emergency training on first aid or CPR. Check with your local American Red Cross chapter for training classes.
- Identify a meet-up spot for family members in case you are separated and cannot reach home.
- If you are pregnant, know the location of other places to have your baby in case you cannot get to the hospital or birthing center of your choice. If you are close to your due date, talk to your health care provider about what to do in case of an emergency.
- Make sure you know how to shut off gas, water and electric supplies. Keep a fire extinguisher in your home. Familiarize yourself with community shelters and evacuation plans and make sure that your car is full of gas in case you need to leave.



Photo courtesy FEMA

Plan your emergency supplies

Put together an emergency kit for your family, including supplies such as flashlights, batteries, a first-aid kit, food and water.



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If you are pregnant, your kit should also have:

- ☐ nutritious foods, such as protein bars, nuts, dried fruit and granola
- ☐ prenatal medical records
- ☐ maternity and baby clothes
- ☐ prenatal vitamins and other medications
- ☐ extra bottled water
- ☐ emergency birth supplies, such as clean towels, sharp scissors, infant bulb syringe, sterile gloves, two white shoelaces, sheets and sanitary pads
- ☐ two blankets
- ☐ closed-toe shoes

If you have an infant, your kit should also have:

- ☐ a thermometer
- ☐ copies of vaccination records
- ☐ antibacterial wipes and hand sanitizer
- ☐ dish soap
- ☐ a portable crib
- ☐ baby food in pouches or jars to last seven days, and feeding spoons
- ☐ bottles
- ☐ two baby blankets
- ☐ extra baby clothes and shoes for older infant
- ☐ ready-to-feed formula that does not need water, to last seven days
- ☐ baby sling or carrier
- ☐ diapers, wipes and diaper rash cream to last seven days
- ☐ medications and infant liquid pain reliever, such as ibuprofen or acetaminophen

During and after a disaster

If you evacuate, remember to take your emergency kit with all your medicines, medical documents and emergency supplies for your family. Upon arrival at a shelter, make sure officials know that you are pregnant or have an infant with you.

If you have an infant, breastfeeding is the best food for your baby after a disaster. It is naturally clean, helps protect your infant from illnesses and can provide comfort to both you and your baby. Continuing to breastfeed after a disaster will help keep up your milk supply.

If you are feeding your baby infant formula, ready-to-feed formula is recommended because no water is needed to prepare it. If it is not possible to use ready-to-feed formula, use bottled water to prepare the powdered or concentrated formula during and after a disaster, as water supplies may be contaminated. If bottled water is unavailable, use boiled water. When preparing formula with boiled water, let the formula cool before giving it to your baby. Always clean all bottles and nipples before each use. Wash or sanitize your hands before preparing formula. If you are breastfeeding, you should think about getting some ready-to-feed formula in case the emergency affects your milk supply or makes it so you cannot breastfeed.



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Being pregnant during and after a disaster can be a stressful time and hard on your body. Rest as much as you can, drink plenty of clean water and eat several times during the day. It is important to go for your regular prenatal care visits as soon as you are out of immediate danger. If you cannot reach your regular health care provider, ask at the emergency shelter or local hospital where you can go to receive care.

Many new mothers have “the blues” after the birth of their baby. You may feel irritable, cry easily or feel sad. But if these feelings last longer than the first 10 days after birth, they may be a sign of postpartum depression. If you think you may have postpartum depression, call a health professional. This is a serious illness. Do not be afraid to ask for help or discuss your feelings. If you ever feel like harming yourself or your baby, talk to a health care provider right away.

Dealing with a disaster can be a stressful time for a family, especially if you have been evacuated from your home. If you are concerned about your relationship or your safety, call the National Domestic Violence Hotline at 1-800-799-7233.

Know the signs of preterm labor

Preterm labor – which is labor that begins before 37 weeks of pregnancy – may occur in some pregnant women after a disaster. If you have any signs of preterm labor, call your health care provider, go to the hospital or tell the person in charge of the emergency shelter right away:

- contractions that make your belly tighten up like a fist every 10 minutes or more often
- change in the color of your vaginal discharge, or bleeding from your vagina
- the feeling that your baby is pushing down, called pelvic pressure
- low, dull backache
- cramps that feel like your period
- belly cramps with or without diarrhea



For more information on healthy pregnancies and babies, visit marchofdimes.org